

## **Synopsis of Synar**

### **Introduction**

“Synar” is Goal 8 of the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which has oversight of Synar, allows States to submit the Synar goal at the end of the calendar year, three months after submission of the major bulk of the SAPT Block Grant. This is to provide sufficient time for analysis of data generally collected during the summer and completion of the subsequent Annual Synar Report. Therefore, the Synar goal has three major steps: 1) collecting data; 2) analyzing data, and 3) reporting data. The results directly reflect the compliance of Kentucky’s vendors in not selling cigarettes to youth under 18 years of age.

### **Collection of data**

Data is collected during the Annual Synar Survey, during which underage youth called Investigative Aides (IA) attempt to purchase cigarettes. They are accompanied by officers from the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC), and visit stores that have been randomly selected from the population of outlets in Kentucky that sell cigarettes. All I.A.’s look and dress age appropriate. Females cannot wear makeup during inspections and males cannot have facial hair. I.A.’s do not carry an I.D and if the store clerk asks them how old they are, I.A.’s are instructed to give their real age. The results (sell or no sell) are recorded, and when all of the selected stores have been visited, the raw data is sent to the Synar Evaluator for analysis.

### **Analysis of data**

Data analysis is performed on the raw data to achieve a State rate, called the Retailer Violation Rate (RVR). In the past, this was accomplished by analyzing 17 strata—corresponding to the 14 Regional Boards— with each region having its own rate. (Two of the strata were divided further due to their size.) This year a smaller random sample was drawn, (231) which was statewide, and this year’s RVR is 7.8%.

The Synar Evaluator sends the data tables to the Synar Coordinator so that the Annual Synar Report can be completed.

### **Reporting of data**

This is done in two steps. First, the template provided by SAMHSA is completed for the narrative portion of the report, then the data tables from the Synar Evaluator are added. The completed report is sent to SAMHSA.

### **Conclusion**

The FFY 2014 Annual Synar Buying Survey has produced a low retail violation rate (RVR) of 7.8%. Kentucky again can be proud of the hard work that tobacco enforcement and prevention professionals are doing. From a baseline rate of 24.0% when SAMHSA put the Synar Regulation into effect in 1997 – Kentucky’s RVR has decreased steadily until reaching single-digits in 2002 (9.7%) and then plateaued at ~5% which has been maintained since 2004. Since the inception of the federal Synar program in 1997, Kentucky Synar retail violation rates have been consistently below the national rates. The national average for all years (1997-2012) is 15.8% as compared to 9.5% for Kentucky. While Kentucky’s retail violation rates have greatly improved, youth still report that it is easy to obtain tobacco products from stores and from non-commercial sources such as an older friend, sibling or parent.

The graph below shows the Kentucky Synar violation rates compared to the national violation rates from 1997 to 2013. The 2014 national rates are not yet available.

